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Villanueva MDWCA Under “BOIL WATER ADVISORY”

(Santa Fe, NM) – Today the New Mexico Environment Department’s Drinking Water Bureau (NMED-DWB) and New Mexico Department of Health’s Office of Epidemiology, advised the Village of Villanueva to issue a boil water advisory to citizens served by the village water system.

The village, located approximately 25 miles south of Las Vegas, was put on a boil water advisory on Saturday, March 13, due to bacteriological contamination that exceeded the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). Customers of the Villanueva water system were asked to boil water for five minutes before drinking, cooking, and dishwashing.

The presence of *E. coli* in water indicates that the water may have been in contact with sewage or animal wastes, and could contain disease-causing organisms. Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals. However, a positive test for *E. coli* in the drinking water supply may indicate the presence of dangerous strains of *E. coli*. The more dangerous strains of *E. coli*, often associated with contaminated food and water, may cause severe gastrointestinal illness and, in rare cases, even death. Children, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals are at an increased risk for illness.

Lab results received on Saturday afternoon confirmed earlier tests, which indicated the presence of *E. coli* bacteria at various points in the water system.

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The Drinking Water Bureau and the water system operator were trouble-shooting the water system problem over the weekend and determined several sanitary deficiencies that may be causing the *E. coli* contamination in the water system. The main problem identified was with the old storage tank lid. This was corrected immediately by disinfecting the tank with sodium hypochlorite. The Drinking Water Bureau, and its contractor, the New Mexico Rural Water Association, will be at the water system today to correct additional sanitary deficiencies identified at the well house and in the distribution system. This will include the installation of a new chlorination system and thoroughly flushing out the water system. Upon properly addressing all sanitary deficiencies identified, and establishing acceptable disinfection procedures for the water, a round of “special” water samples will be completed to assure that the water is free of harmful microbes and is safe to drink.

The Department of Health will remain on alert for any health effects linked to this water quality issue. Residents may call (505) 476-3572 if they have any water-related health concerns.

For more information, contact Chris Serazio, Environmental Specialist, NMED, at (505) 827-1400 x.1031 or Julie Desai, Hydrologist, NMED at x.1014.

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